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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
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SPOT COMMENTARY: Military Dissension in El Salvador

Lieutenant Colonel Ochoa, commander of El Salvador's northern Cabanas Department, has declared himself in rebellion against the authority of Defense Minister Garcia. Ochoa made the decision after receiving word he was to be transferred to an attache post in South America. (C)

COMMENT: Ochoa's refusal to obey orders is likely to lead to an open power struggle between Defense Minister Garcia and rightist military officers who favor ultracconservative assembly leader Roberto D'Aubuisson. D'Aubuisson has been seeking to remove Garcia as Defense Minister and replace him with a more conservative officer, and Ochoa is known as a D'Aubuisson ally. As a result, Garcia was planning to remove Ochoa from his post and send him to Uruguay. (SNF)

Ochoa is a popular and highly regarded field commander, and he has a number of supporters in other key military units, including several of the elite US-trained, quick reaction battalions. While his opposition is being labeled a coup attempt, it is not likely to lead to actual fighting. Nevertheless, the political struggle will be intense, and Garcia may be forced to compromise to prevent a complete split in military ranks. (SNF)

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